



# Free Expression

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A NEWSLETTER OF FREEDOM FORUM

Annual Media Report 2016

## Relatively Peaceful, but Inaction on Impunity Chills Nepali Media

Freedom Forum observed relatively peaceful atmosphere for media this year (2016) with significant decline on number of press freedom violations. FF recorded only 25 incidents of press freedom violations during 2016 against 83 of 2015. With 25 incidents of violations, nearly 75 media persons were affected. Despite having much awaited constitution in place, political stability was threatened especially due to political parties' differences over provincial demarcation, which undoubtedly kept media under fear of intimidations. There was neither any forward-looking policy on media, nor any measure taken from the State to address the impunity relating to the crimes against journalists, which is a pressing need, but has been pending for long. Journalists' professionalism is still eluding.

### Some Points

- Province No. 2 (which includes eight districts in the southern plains) and 3 (which houses the capital city Kathmandu) witnessed the highest number of violations- six and 12 respectively whereas Province No. 4 and 6 remained free of violations. Similarly, Province No. 5 witnessed four violations followed by Province No. 7 with two violations and the only one at Province No. 1.
- There were 11 incidents of attacks, while five threats and death threat combined, four manhandles, and five arrest/ detentions including attacks on two media houses.

*FM Radio building bulldozed: Local authority bulldozed FM Radio building, disrupting operation, and destroying equipments of Radio Dhadaling (106 MHZ) of Dhadaling, a neighbouring district to the capital city, Kathmandu, on September 23.*

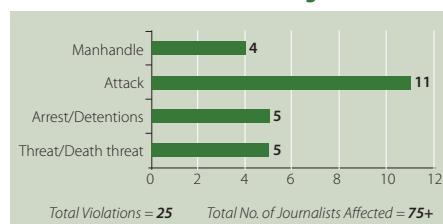


Photo: www.cpj.org

*Station Manager of the FM, Rajaram Sharma, said, "A team mobilized by the district authority reached the FM station at 4:00 am, forced the employees out of the office and bulldozed the building. It not only destroyed the equipment but also halted radio service completely. The attack caused the loss of some Rs 10 million."*

- As in the past, police persons were involved in many incidents of violations, while local leaders and cadres of different political parties are the second most hostile to media persons. Threat was more to reporters writing on misuse of public money and unmanaged public service delivery.

### Press Freedom Violations during 2016



*Political cadre, government staff attack reporter: Reporter with News 24 TV, onlinekhabar news portal and Arthik Abhiyan daily, Raj Kamal Singh, from Dhanusha district was attacked over a news story he published in the Arthik Abhiyan daily about the misuse of budget in the District Development Committee (DDC) and Constituency Development Fund.*

*On September 14, a group of some seven persons led by President of Dhanusha Constituency-1 of Nepali Congress party attacked reporter Singh reasoning the news earned disrepute to Gohiwar's political image.*

- Journalists in the capital city faced highest number of intimidations, mostly by police.

*Attack on journalist inside Singha Durbar: Police persons attacked Kabin Adhikari, a photojournalist with an online news portal- onlinekhabar while he was photographing the arrest of protesters inside Singha Durbar, the central administrative place of the country.*

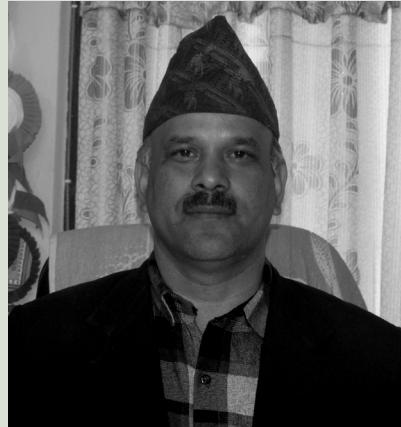
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# Message from Executive Chief

The Open Government Partnership (OGP), a global initiative launched since September 2011, has been expanding. So far, 75 countries have joined this platform, but Nepal is yet to join it. Among the south Asian countries, Sri-Lanka joined OGP in 2014 while Pakistan and Afghanistan in 2015. Civil society has been demanding and recommending Nepal to take part in OGP since its inception. Last year, the Government of Nepal itself participated in OGP summit and formed a High Level Working Committee. The Committee provided a report on importance of OGP and recommended the Government that it joined the global bandwagon. Freedom Forum had hoped that Nepal would declare its partnership in the fourth OGP Summit held from 7 to 9 December 2016 in Paris. Despite participation of distinguished authorities in the Summit, Nepal failed to announce its participation in the OGP. It was because the political and administrative representatives showed dilemma on decision-making. It is really a worrying fact that Nepal failed to show high level of political commitment on ensuring transparent, accountable and pro-people governance in the country.

At a time when the country has promulgated new constitution, and witnessed voices for country's headway to economic prosperity from transitional politics, and a huge amount is being spent in the post-earthquake reconstruction activities, the Government could earn good repute if it had participated in the OGP. Good governance is the most sought after matter to bring positive change in people's life. For this, the democratic government has the role to play.

Nepal has met the minimum criteria to be eligible for the membership of OGP. We have RTI Act in place. Both the government and CSOs efforts are positive for the effective implementation of this Act. The political and administrative officials in Nepal need to periodically provide their property details to the government. However, compliance with the proactive disclosure provision must be strict. Similarly, efforts are underway to ensure transparency and quality in Nepal's budget system. Nevertheless, out of eight essential documents of budget, six are prepared and disseminated through internet for people's information. There are still not sufficient information on these. Similarly, the practice of pre-budget discussion has begun, but people's easy access to all information on budget is yet to ensured. In order to guarantee people's participation in public affairs, it is essential to promote the culture of people's cooperation and engagement with State agencies and bring policy reforms. It does not mean we do not have any policy and legal mechanism for it. For instance, there is 14-set planning process where the targeted group can provide their suggestions. As Nepal has accepted minimum guidelines of OGP, it is eligible to be the OGP member. In addition to this, Nepal is in need of open and transparent government, collaboration and cooperation between government and people. Those in power still exhibit the behavior as if they



are not people's representatives. It has contributed to badly shrink the civic space, thereby panicking CSOs.

With this in the background, Nepal needs to participate in the OGP without delaying the guarantee of transparent and accountable governance and recognition of CSOs as the partners to take up people's voices. Recently, Nepal has taken a positive step in the open contracting. The positive efforts are seen in the parliamentary transparency. Debate has begun at the government level on open government data. Another laudable point to share here is- The Office of the Company Registrar has archived data under the Pvt and Public Ltd showing ensuring ownership transparency. The issue of transparent investment on media has come to fore on policy level. So, time has come to promote these improvements and continue good governance with the internalization of OGP concept. Delaying partnership with OGP, Nepal is to waste its valuable time.

In today's technically innovative era, extensive use of information technology in conducting state mechanism is beneficial to the overall development. OGP also encourages innovative application of technology to eliminate existing maladies like corruption, prejudice, delayed activities, and to increase government's capacity, to ensure public participation through teamwork and to achieve maximum result in shortest possible time. To this motive, its firm footsteps towards national and sub-national level are necessary. As Nepal has adopted a federal set up with seven provinces and is in the process of establishing 719 local units, embracing OGP with national commitment is imperative. More important is to establish transparent and accountable governance with the development of broader partnership and coordination among public and private sector. Let's hope, Nepal joins OGP soon. 

**Taranath Dahal**

# 11th IGF held in Mexico

The 11th annual Internet Governance Forum (IGF), the mega event featuring multifarious issues relating to internet, drawing multi-stakeholders from across the globe, was held in Guadalajara city of Mexico, from 6 to 9 December 2016 with the overarching theme of 'Enabling Inclusive and Sustainable Growth'.

The assembly of over 3,000 people representing the government and private sectors from the world was joined by the policy makers, development experts, researchers on media, internet, freedom of expression, techno-sociology, rights defenders, FoE practitioners, hacktivists, data scientists, cyber security analysts and others. Dozens of papers on various themes under the internet governance were presented in different sessions during the event. Surveillance, online trusts, digital divide, data, social media, internet rights, cyber security, ethics in the internet environment, inclusive and development-oriented internet, access to internet, ICT, internet's connection with sustainable development goals, freedom of expression on internet, internet of things (IoT) were some of the most discussed issues in the global meeting.

There were numerous workshops, dynamic coalition meetings, open forums and knowledge stalls to engage the participants in the open discussions. Freedom Forum, with the support from IFEX, had got opportunity to attend this event which, the UN mentions, as the widest-reaching international multi-stakeholder policy forum on Internet governance.

FF's Executive Board Member Mr Sahajman Shrestha attended the IGF this year. Sharing his observation, Mr Shrestha said, "What I liked most about the IGF was every participant was free to raise questions on any issue relating to internet regime. I shared my views on Nepal's situation on introduction of internet and its expansion and freedom of expression issues on internet."

According to him, Nepalis must take new skills and knowledge from such global forum where the people from the governments and private sectors engage in open discussion on internet related policy, rights and technical mechanism. He complained that he saw no other Nepalis attending the IGF.

The IGF's mandate was renewed for 10 years at the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) in December 2015.

The FF had also participated in the 9th IGF held in Istanbul, Turkey. 

# Press Freedom Violations

## Police persons continue hostility to journalists

**A.** Reporter with a local Manaskhanda daily, Dinesh Singh Mahara, was taken under control for two hours by the police when he had reached the District Police Office (DPO) for news reporting on 7 November 2016. DPO, Kanchanpur, took him under control. Kanchanpur is the far western district in the southern plain of the country.

Editor of the Manashkhanda daily, Khem Bhandari said, "Reporter Mahara was taken under control by an inspector as he reached the DPO for news collection. The reason behind his control was that he had been reporting on the misdeeds of the police persons."

However, police person taking Mahara under control was accusing reporter of recording people's conversations on the DPO premises. On the other hand, reporter Mahara argued that he was using mobile phone for personal purpose not for recording the activities around the DPO.

**B.** Correspondent with Image Television channel and setopati.com, Anil Tiwari, was attacked by police persons while reporting a protest against Parsa District Court's verdict on 1 December.

Nagarik daily reporter, Ritesh Tripathi, who was with Anil during the reporting explained: Inspector AK Mahato of Area Police Office, Shreepur, approached Tiwari and asked him to stop visualizing the use of force by the police to suppress protesting group in front of Parsa District Court.

But, reporter Tiwari refused and continued taking video with his mobile. Thereafter, Inspector attacked Tiwari with fist and broke the mobile into pieces. However, Tiwari managed to escape injury.

**C.** In another incident of press freedom violation by the security persons, reporters duo Arun Yadav for the National News Agency (RSS) from Saptari and Chandan Yadav of the Madheshbani weekly were manhandled by police persons in Rajbiraj, Saptari on 26 November.

They were manhandled while reporting about sage Ramdev's visit at Chhinnamasta Temple in Saptari district.

## Political cadres manhandle reporter

Ashok Paudel, a reporter with the Radio Banganga, from Rupandehi, a city in the southern plains of Nepal in its western part, was manhandled by protestors, on 21 December.

The protestors manhandled reporter Paudel while he was going to attend a program nearby Kapilvastu district. But reasoning the agitation called by the a youth wing- Youth Association- of major opposition party, CPN-UML, the Association cadres grilled reporter whey he was driving during protest.

Talking to Freedom Forum, reporter Paudel said, "The local cadres of the Association and even a local businessperson Shankar Khanal kicked me while riding motorcycle. I displayed my Press Card; however, the rowdy demonstrators seized my motorcycle's keys, manhandled me, and spoke foul on me." He added that he, however, escaped the injury.

The Association cadres were protesting against government's efforts to pass constitution amendment bill.

On telephone conversation with Freedom Forum, reporter Arun Yadav said: "We two along with other half dozen of journalists were manhandled by Superintendent of Police Dibesh Lohani and his subordinate staffs while reporting on Baba Ramdev's visit to Chhinnamasta Temple and his prayers."

"Interestingly, SP Lohani allowed Indian reporters into the temple premises whereas forcefully restricted us. He even spoke foul on journalists and tried to seize cameras," added Arun, saying, they complained at Office of the Chief District Officer, Saptari, about SP Lohani's misbehavior.

Such continuous hostility of security personnel towards journalists depicts how miserable the atmosphere for press freedom is. Controlling media not only ruins journalists' right to reporting but also bars people from information, and freedom of expression.



*Murder accused Sanjay Saha handcuffed.*

## Singhaniya's murderer remanded to custody

**D**istrict Court Dhanusha issued a decision to remand an accused of Arun Singhaniya's murder- Sanjay Saha- to custody on 1 December. Judge Deepak Kumar Dahal issued the order on the basis of evidences presented.

Sah was facing the case on masterminding the murder of media entrepreneur Arun Singhaniya on the basis of statements given by the alleged duos Chandra Deep Yadav and Manak Lama.

Lawmaker Sah is currently in custody for his alleged involvement in a bomb explosion at Ramanand Chowk of Janakpur. Earlier, he had faced a 21-month jail term on a case relating to arms and ammunition.

Singhaniya was the chairperson of Radio Today Communications group. He was shot dead at local Shiva Chowk of Janakpur city on March 1, 2010.

**Impunity Watch**

Continued from Page 1

- On April 10. There was a sit-in being staged by the government employees, which he was photographing.
- The trend of running internet-based media has hopped significantly. Currently, there are 501<sup>1</sup> internet-based media in Nepal till date against the record of 250 in 2015.
- Freedom Forum's study shows: Out of the total reporters/news writers and news sources, there are only 13.4% women working as reporters and 10.67% women acted as news sources in the main dailies.
- Internet penetration is expanding gradually in Nepal. It has now reached to 52.7% as compared to the record of 44.11<sup>2</sup> in the last year.
- Nepali media is still suffering the impunity relating to the crimes against journalists/media persons. Many crimes (murder of) against journalists are yet to be addressed by the State.

## Gender Equality Poor

Adding further dimension to its regular report, Freedom Forum on the last three months (October to December 2016) conducted media monitoring through gender perspectives, and found women's presence meager. News sources, as news writers and news presenters were almost all males.

- More than 50% dominance of male journalists and sources in the news depicts poor gender equality in Nepali media.
- Among the total media persons, males occupy 95 percent.
- Study of 5 main dailies (Kantipur, Annapurna Post, Commander Post, Republica and The Himalayan Times) revealed the following facts:
  - There were 13.4% female reporters and 10.67% female sources were quoted in the newspapers,
  - 48.15% news the female reporters brought are about political issues, whereas only 18.52% about social and legal issues.
- Attracting women towards media and retaining them in this profession is a big challenge. Women occupy around 15% population of total Nepali journalists, which stands around 11,000.

## Social Networking Sites

Internet is becoming increasingly pervasive in Nepal too. As much as 52.7% of the total populations is connected to internet irrespective of convenience and speed. Approximately 8 million Nepalis are using social media.<sup>3</sup> However, the users of internet are almost city centered.

- Recent trend of hash tags becoming viral were- Tarkariwali, Hanumanji, Lokman, Kulman, Sumanbhai, Kanchan Sharma. The issues over Kanchan Sharma's television interview and lately Prime Minister's property details created furor in Nepali social media.
- Interestingly, Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal had expressed his annoyance at the comments posted about the government's performance on social media. He called upon real journalists to help the government by finding some ways to make people responsible to their expressions at a program.

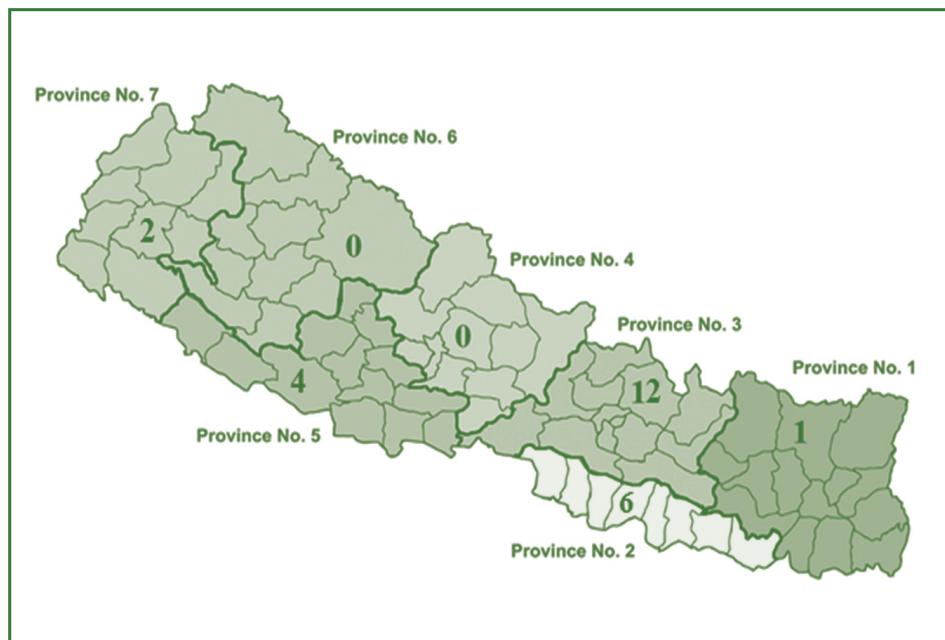
## Impunity Watch

Adding another dimension to the regular report, Freedom Forum conducted a study on legal status of journalists/media persons murdered and disappeared from 1996 to 2016 and found that more than two-third of the cases relating to media persons' murder were not investigated.

Murder cases of Ishwor Budathoki (RSS), Kumar Ghimire (Janaprabhat weekly), Dev Kumar Acharya (Janadisha daily), Raj Kumar KC (RSS), Rohan Chaudhary (Jaleshwornath FM) have neither been investigated nor any process forwarded. Similarly, murder cases of Gopal Giri (Nepali Patra), media entrepreneurs Jamim Shah and Arun Singhaniya are still under investigation.

*Though very late, a convict of Arun Singhaniya's murder was held into custody for further investigation on 1st December 2016. Earlier*

## Which Province, How Many Violations?



*Nepal police, after six years of the murder of media entrepreneur Arun Singhaniya from Janakpur, a city in the southern plains of Nepal, proved that suspended member of parliament (MP), Sanjay Sah, was the mastermind.*

*Held in connection with another crime- bomb blast in Janakpur city, the police investigation revealed that he was the mastermind behind the murder of media entrepreneur Singhaniya. Singhaniya was the chairperson of Radio Today Communications Group. The police investigation further disclosed that four other persons – Chandra Dip Yadav, Yongendra Sahani, Om Prakash Yadav and Mukesh Chaudhary- were also involved in the murder. Singhaniya was shot dead at local Shiva Chowk of Janakpur city on March 1, 2010.*

## Policy Watch

The Ministry of Information and Communications has sent the Directive on Operation and Management of Online Media to the Council of Ministers for approval after the revision. Earlier, the Directive had drawn flak over its various provisions that were against freedom of expression, e.g. government could block websites if they failed to renew their registration on time, and published content against the law. As per the directive, one needs to register online media before launching it, that is to say, any website that wants to do online journalism should apply for registration with details of editor or broadcasters. After the freedom of expression defenders and practitioners arguing that at a time when the online media are gradually becoming quick, convenient and the major source of

information to the people living even in the remote areas of the country; government's move undoubtedly tried to silence such new media, the Ministry was bound to withdraw and revise the Directive.

The government approved the National Mass Communications Policy in July 22 after the Council of Ministers gave its nod to the draft prepared by a high-level committee. Despite having representation from different sectors (21 members) in the high-level committee the policy is yet to internalize the democratic values. It has failed to duly address the issues relating to internet-based media. The 'registration' of the internet-based media discourages freedom of expression on the internet. The internet-based media has been treated differently from the print media which is wrong. The Policy has also failed to duly mention the transformation of State-run media- Radio Nepal and Nepal Television- into the public service broadcasting, which is long advocated agenda for media reform in Nepal.

Other serious issues to address positively are frequency distribution, license, role of state-

owned media, Press Council's role, social accountability, investment on media industry, etc.

Against the spirit and principles of the freedom of expression, Press Council Nepal has planned to conduct license exams for the journalists. It is quite ridiculous to make one take exam to become a journalist, because the qualification tests of journalists can be conducted by the concerned media houses. It is the media house's right to determine what sort of human resources is required for it. As the Council is the State-run body, it is highly likely that only those favouring government can be journalists which is fully against the freedom of expression principles and practices. To a positive development, the procedure for implementing the provision providing 50 percent discount to working journalists having ID Cards issued by Department of Information for treatment in government hospitals is on the final stage.

Similarly, the government fixed the minimum monthly wage of working journalists at Rs 19,500 to be effective from 16 July. The government made this decision after the recommendation by the Minimum Wage

Fixation Committee. Earlier, the minimum monthly wage fixed for the working journalists was Rs 10,008. It is an achievement for the working journalists. Its effective implementation helps in journalists' financial security.

### To conclude,

- Lesser the political agitations, fewer the press freedom violations,
- Political parties need to instruct their cadres and local leaders to respect journalists, and so is the case on security agencies,
- Efforts from State sides are essential to address impunity relating to crimes against journalists, which would help discourage intimidations against journalists and create atmosphere conducive for free and fair journalism and free flow of information,
- In case the current differences of political parties on pressing issues of federalism continue, the agitations in the local levels would put the media at the receiving end,
- Journalists' eagerness for better news would not only hone skills but also contribute to media professionalism,
- Section 47 of Electronic Transaction Act is still a threat to freedom of expression.

<sup>1</sup> Press Council Nepal

<sup>2</sup> Nepal Telecommunications Authority

<sup>3</sup> Center for Media Research

# Death Threats to Reporters

**A.** Senior reporter with the Rajdhani daily, Tapendra Karki, editors duo Rajan Sharma and Ganesh Basnet were issued death threat over the publication of news on suspended Chief of anti-graft body, Commission for Investigation of Abuse of Authority (CIAA), Lokman Singh Karki, on 23 October. The Rajdhani daily is published from the capital city Kathmandu.

Senior reporter Karki said, "In the evening around 6:45 pm, a person called on Rajdhani daily's office landline number from Okhaldhunga, a remote hilly district, and threatened me not to write the news on Lokman Singh Karki anymore or else my life would be risked."

He further said the person had called from some extension number, so, they could not trace the number. The person threatening over phone claimed himself being the suspended

CIAA Chief Karki. Though he did not disclose his full name, he had spoken foul on him and his colleagues.

According to him, the threat call was received simultaneously by two other persons- editors Sharma and Basnet. CIAA Chief Karki was suspended upon the impeachment motion filed at the Legislature-Parliament questioning his official conducts and contempt of court.

The incident occurred in the capital city shows the journalists writing about misconduct and irregularities of big people are always targeted irrespective of place (city/mofussil) they carry out the profession. Moreover, the threat in the name of suspended chief of a constitutional body is more shameful that tells the authority is hostile to free press. It has badly instilled self-censorship among the journalists.

**B.** Reporter with the Kantipur daily from Nuwakot, Krishna Thapa, received a death threat over the publication of news against Tara Bahadur Karki, President, Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Nuwakot, on 24 October. Nuwakot is a hilly district adjoining the capital city.

The news published in Kantipur daily on 22 October was about the sale of inedible beaten rice from a food store owned by Tara Bahadur Karki. Local administration found the beaten rice unhygienic during the market monitoring.

Talking to Freedom Forum, reporter Thapa said, "It was last Sunday, Tara Bahadur called me over telephone and threatened of life reasoning the publication of news on the sale of unhygienic food from his store."

# 34 Trained on Investigative Journalism

‘I found the training very useful to whet my skill in this profession’

Freedom Forum conducted two lots of 5-day ‘Training on Investigative Journalism: RTI and Data as Tools’- one in Kathmandu, on November 26, and another in Gaidakot, Nawalparasi.

A total of 34 journalists- 16 at Kathmandu and 18 at Gaidakot- from various print and electronic media participated in the training organized under the project, “Support to Enable Environment for Freedom of Expression in Nepal (SEFEN)- No News Is Bad News” funded by Free Press Unlimited. In the Kathmandu training, the journalists were from the Kathmandu Valley (Kathmandu, Lalitpur and Bhaktapur districts) and Kavre, Sindhupalchok, and Dolakha districts.

Noted media persons- Executive Chief at FF, Taranath Dahal; General Secretary, Dharmendra Jha; and senior investigative journalist, Hasta Gurung; women rights activist, Babita Basnet; open data practitioner, Anjesh Tuladhar; and South Asia Coordinator of International Federation of Journalist, Ujjwal Acharya- facilitated the training.

During the training, the trainers shed light on the national and international evolution of right to information (RTI), its practices and importance, and how RTI could be a tool of investigative journalism.

Similarly, principles of investigative journalism, its scope, planning and goals, media and domestic violence, girl trafficking, gender discrimination, and RTI and data as tools of investigative writing, data tracking and visualization, reporting in digital age and digital security were other topics the trainers provided the orientations on.

The Kathmandu training was participated by Lal Kumar Moktan (Radio Bhimeshwor 90.8), Anish Tiwari (Kantipur daily), Aditya Dahal



(Commander Post), Pushkar Raj Budhathoki (Samcharpatra), Suresh Budhathoki (Baahrakhari), Kishor Budhathoki (Karobar daily), Rajan Bhattacharai (Freelance), Mohan Kumar Singh (MJS Nepal), Mukti Babu Regmi (Nepalbani network), Purna Prasad Mishra (RSS), Devraj KC (Sanjivanipatra weekly), Nagendra Adhikari (Kantipur Publications), Samjhana Humagain (Araniko TV), Fatima Banu (Muslim Awaaz online), Ambika Ghimire (Samajkhabar.com), Madhav Prasad Ghimire (Manav Aawaj weekly) and Pabitra Guragain (RSS).

Similarly, a total of 18 journalists from various print and electronic media participated in the Gaidakot training. The participants were from Nawalparasi, Chitwan, Kapilavastu and Rupandehi districts. They were- Govinda Lamichhane (Parasi Patra weekly), Tilak Subedi (Butwal Times), Kamala Rana (Madhya Bindu FM), Prakash Sharma (Basyal) (Radio Samarthy), Laxmi Poudel (Vijay FM), Punam Gautam (BesoTv), Kismat Chaudhary (Radio Mukti), Mina Poudel (Radio Devdaha), Pradeep Acharya (Dainik Patra), Saniulla Dhobi (Onlinekabhar.com), Anil Yadav (Devchuli TV), Ram Bikas Chaudhary (Commander Post), Gurudev Paudel (Radio Bangana), Bipav Kafle (Kayakairan Daily), Prawin Kumar Dutta (Kantipur TV), Nabin Paudel (Kantipur TV), Arjun Sapkota (Devchuli TV) and Surya Prasad Adhikari (Radio Nepal)

Following the Kathmandu training, one of the participants, Pabitra Guragain, who is an English Desk Editor said, “After the training, I am finding change within myself in the ways of analysis of the news. As I realise, I have become more inquisitive towards the news content. I

work at RSS as a news translator (from Nepali to English) and editor. If I find any confusion in the news or find it missing required information, I search for the contact number of sources, establish contact and add extra information to the news item to hone its quality.”

Similarly, participant at Nawalparasi training, Laxmi Paudel said: “I am a news reader at Vijay FM. I found the training very useful to whet my skill in this profession. I had little knowledge about RTI and unknown about investigative journalism. These days (after a week of the training), I am preparing to write a story on my own using the knowledge and skills learnt from the training.”

Even though I have written many stories in the newspapers, lessons learnt from this training has added new dimensions to my reporting. After the training, I have written two stories using investigation journalism tools, shared another participant at Kathmandu training, Similarly, Anish Tiwari, a reporter with the Kantipur daily.

The trainings were organized to boost journalists’ skills and knowledge on investigative reporting, so that various underreported socio-economic and other issues could be reported better. FF has expected from the participants that many issues of social injustice, gender discrimination as girl trafficking, violence against women, and administrative malfeasance as misuse of budget would be brought to bring change in the society. The participants were selected from diverse media and geography abiding by the inclusive and participatory policy. As the response from the participants suggest, the trainings have boosted their capacity. However, they need constant prodding to write actively on the issues they want to write.



# Unabated impunity suffers Nepali media

Freedom Forum organized a discussion program on present legal status of the murdered and forcefully disappeared journalists in two decades from the year 1996 to 2016 in Kathmandu on 20 November. It was organized under the project "Support to enable environment for freedom of expression in Nepal (SEFEN)- No News Is Bad News" funded by Free Press Unlimited. It was organized on the occasion of the International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists 2016.

The program discussed on the study report prepared by Freedom Forum's Executive Chief Taranath Dahal and General Secretary Dharmendra Jha, which underscored that Nepali media fared worst in the recent two decades owing to the unabated impunity. Unveiling the study report prepared by FF, General Secretary Jha said as the people involved in the crimes (murder and enforced disappearance) against journalists were not brought to book, the impunity was inflicting the Nepali media.

During the study focused in the period from 1996 to 2016, 23 journalists (including media persons) were murdered from different sides while three had gone missing. It was 1996 when Nepal began to witness the armed revolution that lasted in 2006.

Among 26 incidents, more than two thirds were not investigated. Political pressure and the threat from the oppressors are main reasons behind barring the victims to file case against the attackers, claimed the report. Local courts (district courts) have made decisions on four cases while two are still under consideration. The report further stated that the government, despite forming investigation commissions and committees, did not make public the report on the murder of JP Joshi (Kailali), and Chairman of Channel Nepal TV and Space Time Network, Jamim Shah.

During the study period, the State involved in the murder of seven journalists, while the rebel side in the rest of the crimes. It has been a decade that government and then rebellion force CPN (Maoist) inked the Comprehensive Peace Accord which became a reason for the State authorities to avoid the investigation and litigation on the crimes against journalists, as it was mentioned in the CPA that any incident of political nature could be handled by separate entity- truth and reconciliation commission, and the commission on investigation of enforced disappeared person (CIEDP).



During the programme, CIEDP Chairperson, Lokendra Mallik, appreciated Freedom Forum's study, saying it would help investigation activities at CIEDP. He, however, said the CIEDP was in need of laws for its full functioning. Similarly, Member of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Madhavi Bhatt, said the Commission was yet to begin investigation, and the study would be very useful in the investigation.

Chairperson of the Federation of Nepali Journalists Dr Mahendra Bista informed that FNJ has given information on the crimes against journalist to both CIEDP and TRC for the investigation, and hoped that commissions would bring facts on the incidents.

Deputy Attorney General Sanjib Regmi however said the court had delivered decisions on the cases brought to the court. He urged all to bring the cases in the court. Deputy Superintendent of Police at the Crime Division of Nepal Police, Deepak Regmi, said as there was no separate law on disappearance in Nepal, it could slow the investigation. However, Nepal Police is committed to investigation, the official added.

Media educator Kundan Aryal opined that time has come for both the government and the rebellion side to bring forth clear views on the crimes they perpetrated against the journalists.

Advocate Santosh Sigdel said critical analysis on cases before and after conflict is necessary so that TRC and CIEDP could identify the cases within their policies. According to him, FNJ should advocate and cooperate concerned authorities to find out the proofs. Similarly, TRC and CIEDP should verify the pattern of the impact of conflict on media to ensure press freedom.

Senior journalist Kapil Kafle lauded the study report, saying it could help tremendously to the two commissions on transitional justice.

The program had the participation of 45 participants from diverse sectors: Nepal Police, Armed Police, Legal Authorities (Court, Attorney Office), representatives from Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and from Disappearance Commission (DC), representatives from Nepal Press Council, academia, and freelance journalists and researchers.

Executive Chief Dahal and Chairperson Hari Binod Adhikari concluded the program saying all the recommendations would be critically analyzed in the next research and the report would be duly revised accordingly. Mr Dahal also assured that organization would coordinate and cooperate with state agencies like TRC and CIEDP for further investigation on the murder and disappeared journalists. The program was presided over by FF Chairperson Hari Binod Adhikari.

In a bid to prod the concerned agencies towards ending impunity relating to crimes against journalists, FF provided the impunity report to various concerned agencies. They were- the National Human Rights Commission, Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Commission on Inquiry of Enforced Disappeared Persons, Office of the Attorney General, Office of the Prime Minister and Council of Minister (Chief Secretary), Ministry of Information and Communications, Nepal Police Headquarters, High Level Commission on Inquiry over Violence during Madhes Agitation, and Ministry of Law, Justice and Federal Affairs, and the Home Ministry.

# Stakeholders vocal on revising Mass Communication Policy

Freedom Forum organized a Stakeholder's Discussion program on 'National Mass Communication Policy' in Kathmandu on 15th December. It was organized under the project "Support to enable environment for freedom of expression in Nepal (SEFEN) – No News Is Bad News" funded by Free Press Unlimited.

At the program, FF Executive Chief Taranath Dahal and advocate Santosh Sigdel presented a paper on study of National Mass Communications Policy, showing various weaknesses in the policy as frequency distribution, license, role of State-owned media, efforts to suppress internet-based media and so on. Unveiling the study report, Advocate Santosh Sigdel talked about the government's carelessness in maintaining the policy. The suggestions were furnished, but implementation was weak, he added. Media expert Dr Ram Krishna Timalsina said time had come for all to mull the implementation of the policy. He cautioned that foreign investment in Nepali media at a time when the country is yet to be stable.

Information Officer at the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) Tikaram Pokharel suggested the Freedom Forum's team of comparative analysis of the policy to reveal both positive and negative sides of the all media related policies. He opined that the present policy has failed to link itself with the citizen. The policy is mute on social accountability of media, he argued.

Senior radio journalist Raghu Mainali said the policy was guided by negative restrictions. "The policy is full of contradictions- on the one hand, it signals full press freedom, and while it says even the transport department can operate radio. What's the logic behind fixing 18 years' license for radio? Why the provinces are given rights to allocate radio frequency," he wondered.

Chairman of Independent Film Makers' Society, Anup Subedi, expressed wonder: "Is film a separate arena or one of the mass communications medium. If it is a mass communications medium, why is film censored in Nepal." Similarly, senior advocate Ram Krishna Nirala said it editorial independence was impossible when the same person is publisher and reporter in a print media.



Advocate Rudra Sharma said the policy speaks very little on social media. Mass communications teachers at Tribhuvan University Lekhnath Pandey and Prakash Acharya said many community radios were badly misused by political leaders. This policy does not speak much about multifaceted issues of mass communications, they claimed.

On the occasion, Coordinator of mass communications high level committee and Chairperson of Administrative Court Kashiraj Dahal, admitted that how a policy could be a complete document while the national charter itself draws diverse reactions. However, the mass communications policy has made signals for wider communications fraternity. The policy has come in point-wise rather than descriptive manner, he made it clear.

As the investment in media is not transparent, Nepali journalists have suffered a lot, said Vice-Chairperson of Federation of Nepali Journalists (FNJ) Anita Bindu, wondering to know how the policy has addressed it. At a time when the stakeholders showed concern over various points, Officiating Secretary at Ministry of Information and Communications, Ram Chandra Dhakal, said all- people, system and law- should be empowered for effective implementation of any policy.

However, he said the Ministry would receive the feedback positively and incorporate them accordingly. "As the policy is a dynamic document, it can be revised as per the need, he added, saying, "I think this policy is not

adequate to regulate social media." According to him, it is a global problem how social media can be regulated.

At the end listening to all the queries and suggestions, Media educator Kundan Aryal pointed out that irresponsible character of political leaders led to the ineffective media policy and hence, they should be serious about the formulation and implementation of media policy. Concluding the discussion, FF's Executive Chief Dahal said, "The program's main aim was to focus on weaknesses and possible areas of amendment of policy and the recommendations gathered from discussions will be submitted to National Planning Commission and Ministry of Information and Communication."

The program was attended by total 55 participants from multifarious sectors: Ministry of Information and Communication (MOIC), NIFS, Legal Authorities (Advocate, Attorney Office), representatives from FNJ, representatives from Nepal Press Council, academia, media experts and freelance journalists and other researchers.

In a bid to prod the concerned persons/agencies to heed the recommendations the FF made, the review was submitted to Ministry of Information and Communications, National Planning Commission, Office of the Prime Minister and Council of Ministers (Chief Secretary), Chairperson of the Development Committee of the Legislature-Parliament, and Chairperson of the High Level Recommendation Committee on National Mass Communications Policy. 

# Research/Study

In the recent months, Freedom Forum conducted a study on 'Legal status of journalists/media persons murdered and disappeared during two decades from 1996 to 2016' and made a review of the National Mass Communications Policy 2016.

The study on the murdered and disappeared media person concluded that the unabated impunity on the crimes against journalists was chilling Nepali media. The period of this study is 20 years from 1996, the year from which the country began witnessing armed conflict. The study is therefore an account of the crimes against media persons of this period (1996 -2016). Similarly, the study was conducted with the aim of:

1. To exert pressure on government to ensure safe atmosphere for journalists,
2. To help create atmosphere for reducing impunity,
3. To help in promoting professional journalism,
4. To ensure justice to the families of victim media persons

The study revealed that among 23 journalists/media persons listed as murdered from 1996 (2052BS) till date (2016) by this study, Dekendra Thapa, Gopal Giri, Krishna Sen, Ishwor Budhathoki, Kumar Ghimire, D Koudinnya,

Raj Kumar KC, Kamal AC, Maheshwor Pahari, Khagendra Srestha, Ambika Tim-sina, Nabaraj Sharma Basant, Gyanendra Khadka, and Dhan Bahadur Rokaya totaling 14 were killed before the Comprehensive Peace Accord (November 21, 2006) or during the armed insurgency of Maoist party. Similarly, Uma Singh, Birendra Saha, Jamim Shah, Arun Singhaniya, JP Joshi, Rohan Chaudhary, Devi Prasad Dhital and Pushkar Bahadur Shrestha totaling 9 were murdered after the CPA- the post-insurgency period. It clearly suggests that journalists are killed even in the post-conflict period and hence perpetuates the impunity.

Among 26 incidents, more than two thirds were not investigated. Political pressure and the threat from the oppressors are main reasons behind barring the victims to file case against the attackers, claimed the report. Local courts have made decisions on four cases while two are still under consideration. The report further stated that the government, despite forming investigation committee, did not make



public the report on the murder of JP Joshi (Kailali), and Chairman of Channel Nepal TV and Space Time Network, Jamim Shah.

Similarly, the review of the Mass Communication Policy underscored the need of its revision to better ensure freedom of expression regime. The FF in the review pointed out various weaknesses in the policy as frequency distribution, license, role of State-owned media, efforts to suppress internet-based media and so on. The policy despite named the mass communication, was merely talking about the press. Similarly, at a time when the advocacy was being made to transform the State-owned media- Radio Nepal and Nepal Television- into the public service broadcasting, the policy failed to speak in length about it. There was no logic behind setting 18 years for the license of frequency distribution. The review was made in a bid to prod the concerned agencies including the Ministry of Information and Communications and the policy makers to make aware on the flaws of the policy and to suggest the areas of improvement so that it could embrace the international standard of the freedom of expression and press freedom. 

## Training on Digital Safety

A daylong orientation was organized for FF staffs focusing digital safety on November 11. The orientation was organized as part of the implementation of the project- 'Support to enable environment for freedom of expression in Nepal (SEFEN)- No News Is Bad News' funded by the Free Press Unlimited, FF's office in Kathmandu. The orientation was provided in two sessions- the first focused on digital safety (technical part), while the second on security in the digital age (individual/journalists' security).

Computer Engineer Mahesh Pandey facilitated the first session informing the participants on various issues on how the digital appliances could be kept and used safely. Touching upon the functions of computer (as concept of booting, RAM, ROM, hard disk), internet, hardware, and software tools, he made the FF staff aware on saving hardware, software, and data, data backup, document archiving and management, soft copy archiving, store, network management system, wireless technology, sharing file and folder, and mostly used software in internet.

Similarly, the second session facilitated by Ujjwal Acharya, South Asia Coordinator of the International Federation of Journalists based in Nepal, prioritized individuals'/journalists' security in the digital age. Contents in his presentations were- importance of digital security, scenario how an individual/journalist falls victim to digital threats, concept of virus and anti-virus, malware/spyware, phishing, mnemonic passwords, strong password, physical threats, sensitive information, keeping online communication private, anonymity and bypassing controls on the Internet, protecting yourself and your data.

The orientation was attended by all staffs and some Board members and the Acting Chairperson. They were, Office Assistant, Sarita Chaudhary; Media Monitoring Assistant, Manju Ojha; Gender Content Monitor, Nanu Maiya Khadka; Finance and Administration Officer, Aruna Adhikari; Media Assistant, Kumar Chaulagain; Media Monitoring Officer, Narayan Ghimire; Planning and Policy Advisor, Krishna Sapkota; Executive Chief, Taranath Dahal; Board Members Ram Maya Lamichhane, Kedar



Computer Engineer Mahesh Pandey facilitating the training.

Dahal, and Sahajman Shrestha; General Secretary, Dharmendra Jha; and Acting Chairperson Hari Binod Adhikari.

During the orientations, the participants had raised questions relating to mobile tracking, function of internet, selecting strong passwords, risky things and situation for hardware and software, data saving and retrieving and computer hacking, among others. The orientation remained successful, for it functioned as the basic training and refreshers to the FF staffs on the digital safety and individual security in the digital age. In the beginning of the orientation, the FF staffs were made aware of the FPU's project. 

# Gender Equality Meager in Nepali Media

At a time when the country has witnessed the growing advocacy for equal participation of men and women in any sector for functional democracy, Freedom Forum too diversified its regular media monitoring by encompassing gender content in order to evaluate how the gender equality in Nepali media. With the financial support from Free Press Unlimited (FPU), under the project Support to Enable Environment for Freedom of Expression in Nepal 2016. FF carried out the monitoring from October to December 2016.. The study established the fact that gender discrimination is prevalent in Nepali media.

Weekly monitoring of five national dailies namely: three Nepali medium (Kantipur, Commander Post, and Annapurna Post), and two English medium (The Himalayan Times and Republica) was conducted under the project. First, the contents from five national dailies were scanned and analyzed through gender lenses as how balanced the news are in terms of news source, news reporter, reported news/content etc. These dailies were selected on the basis of their wider circulation, strong public reach and effective journalism. Firstly, eight main news from page no- first, second and fourth- were sampled from each newspaper and all those news were scanned to derive variables chosen for the study. Initially, gender of the journalist writing the news was noted, then the whole story was scanned for appropriate sources; either primary (persons) or secondary (reports, data). If the news contained primary source, both the male and female sources were noted, after that, the story was critically observed whether it deals with women issues.

This report presents an outcome of the assessment on women's participation in the Nepali print media as news source, news actors and news reporters. It also encloses topic wise distribution of main news, categories of

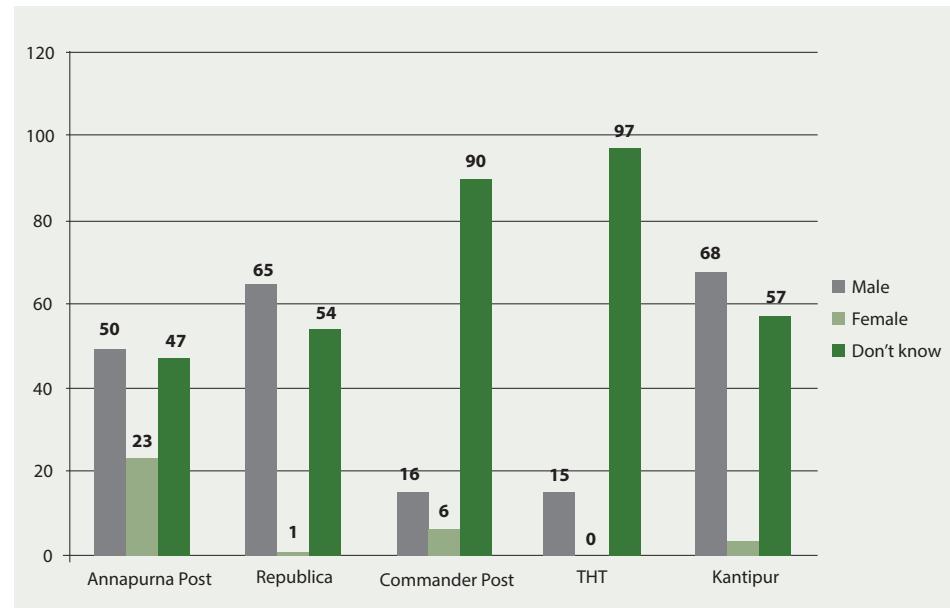
news highlighting inequality and challenging stereotypes of women.

The study revealed that only 13.4% female are news writers among total 247 journalists.

## Key Points:

- Among total 700 news scanned during the study period, 345 news didn't specify name (sex) of journalist.
- 13.4% female reporters and 10.7% female sources were quoted in the newspapers.
- 18.52% females report on social and legal issues whereas only 48.15% report on political issues.
- Overall, news on the political and governmental issues was found dominant.
- Only 45 news stories among total highlighted inequality and warranted further analysis on gender perspective.
- Comparatively, Annapurna Post revealed maximum inclusion of female as journalists and news sources.
- The data revealed poor representation of women's opinion in the politics, government and other development activities regardless of their growing participation in politics and bureaucracy in present context.

## Journalists (Who are talking in the media)



## Methodology

The monitoring was conducted once in a week with different days in different weeks. Firstly, eight main news from page no- first, second and fourth- were sampled from each newspaper and all those news were scanned to derive variables chosen for the study. Initially, gender of the journalist writing the news was noted, then the whole story was scanned for appropriate sources; either primary (persons) or secondary (reports, data). If the news contained primary source, both the male and female sources were noted, after that, the story was critically observed whether it deals with women issues.

On the second phase, all those data were entered into the coding sheet according to the procedures provided by FPU for Gender Content Monitor. Data were again entered into Microsoft Excel for further presentation and comparative analysis. This report is prepared on the basis of the analyses of the data derived from tabulation.

## Analysis

**1. Journalists (Who are talking in the media):-** Data on the sex of journalists on the news monitored depicted dominance of males in

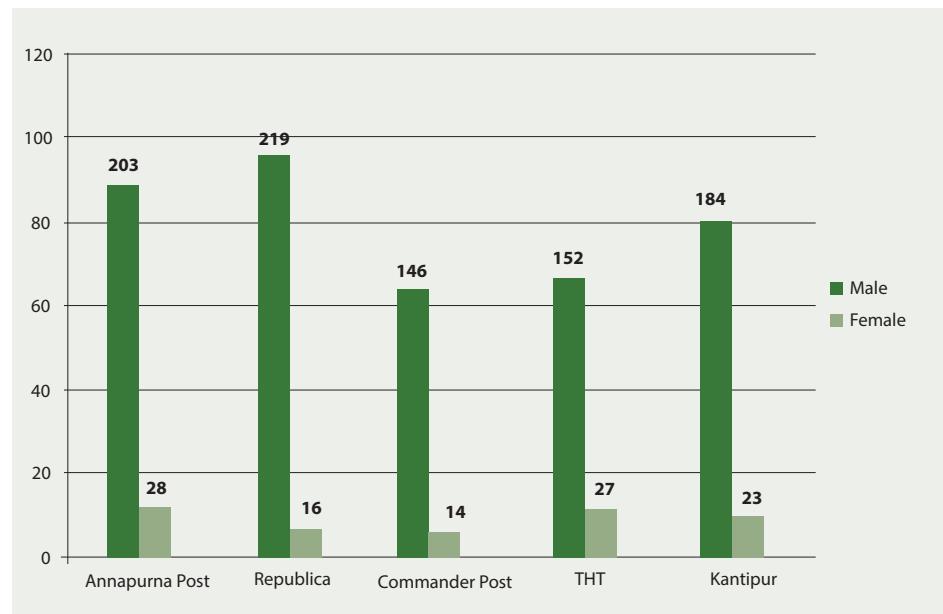
all 5 print media. Among the total number of journalists excluding those with undefined sex, The Himalayan Times (THT) contained 100% males followed by Republica (98.5%), Kantipur (95.8%), Commander Post (72.7%). The Annapurna Post contained least- 63.5%. On the other hand, news on Annapurna Post contained 31.5% female journalists followed by Commander Post (27.2%), Kantipur (4.2%), Republica (1.5%), and finally The Himalayan Times, which has no any female journalists. In most of the news stories of those national dailies journalists' names remained unspecified as shown in the figure. Those with undefined gender were named as: RSS, Himalayan News Service (THT), Reuters, Commander Post, Annapurna, Republica, Kantipur Journalist, etc. The data says THT contained maximum number of unidentified journalists (86.6%) followed by Commander Post (80.4%), Republica with (45%), Kantipur (44.5%) and lastly Annapurna Post (31.96%).

**2. Sources (Who are talking in the stories):**  
 Majority of the male sources were quoted in all newspapers where, Republica has the highest value with 93.2% males followed by Commander Post (91.3%), Kantipur (88.9%), Annapurna Post (87.9%), and lastly THT (84.9%). Talking about female actors in the news stories, the highest coverage is found in THT with 15.1% followed by Annapurna Post (12.1%), Kantipur (11.1%), Commander Post (8.8%) and lastly Republica has the least (6.8%).

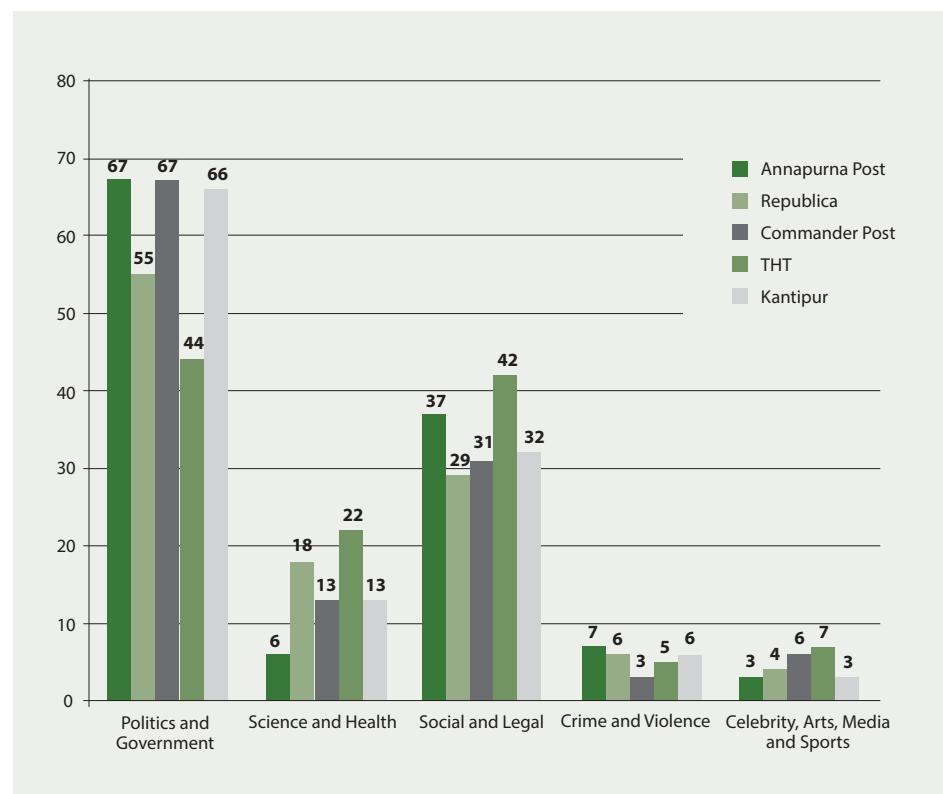
Data resulted from monitoring shows clear gender discrimination as news actors, experts, media educator, etc. The data revealed poor representation of women's opinion in the politics, government and other development activities regardless of their growing participation in politics and bureaucracy in present context.

**3. Topic wise distribution**  
 News on the political and governmental issues was found to be dominant. As per the coding list of topics provided by FPU most of the stories on main news pages came under the Politics and Government followed by Social and Legal, science and health, crime and violence and lastly the celebrities, arts, media and sports. On the basis of news coverage, the Kantipur daily published political news 55% of the total which is still less than that published by Annapurna Post and Commander Post, i.e. 55.8%. This may be due to placement of advertisements even on main news pages in the Kantipur daily.

### Sources (Who are talking in the stories)



### Topic wise distribution



Similarly, the Annapurna Post and the Commander Post covered maximum (55.8%) news about politics and government and remaining on other themes followed by Kantipur (55%), Republica (45.8%) and the Himalayan Times 36.7%. The least contents were found under the topic Celebrities, Arts, Media and Sports in Kantipur, Annapurna Post and Republica; whereas, those in Commander Post and The Himalayan Times were found under Crime and violence. Some of the news which did not exactly fit in to the coded topics where included under others and described in the comment box of the coding sheet as per instruction.

#### 4. Analysis of the gender based story:

Despite being quoted in some major stories on political negotiations, dialogues, social behaviors, etc. lack women's suggestions, feedbacks and opinions. Hence, besides the stories about women, those which lack women's involvement and emphasize more on men's quotes were also coded under warrants further analysis column.

On those bases, 55% news stories from Annapurna Post, 28.6% from Commander Post, 32.4% THT, 44% from Republica and 35% from Kantipur warrant further analysis. Among the total, only 3, 5, 3, 7, 4 news from Annapurna Post, Republica, Commander Post, THT, and Kantipur respectively were about women in the lead role. In some cases,

even though stories challenged stereotype, they did not warrant analysis, as for example: news on women president in Nepal, speaker of Parliamentary House, issues of women politicians.

#### 5. Stories those highlight (in) equality and warrant further analysis:

On the basis of the stories observed through gender lens, some of the major stories underlined as those which warrant further analysis have been highlighted below:

##### Headlines:-

##### *Three human trafficking suspects held.*

The story is based on trafficking of financially disadvantaged women as a market commodity by luring them into going to Kuwait and Oman where they would suffer physical and mental torture and sexual violence. It shows how men misguide poor illiterate women and make their earnings by selling them. Hence, the news clearly perpetuates stereotype and highlights inequality as well.

##### *Girls more susceptible to domestic violence*

This is a story about domestic violence against women and girls existing in the several rural areas of Nepal. Reporter says: theme of this year's Human Rights Day was centered on ensuring safe environment for women and girls at home and also concludes from different discussions on the program that domestic violence is the most rampant form of violence

that females and children have to suffer from. Inclusive of various examples of murder, rape and sexual abuses, the news also reveals data from INSEC report stating children were more vulnerable to violence even at their home. For instance, during political unrest, natural disasters- numbers of such abuses tend to raise as a result of affected social security-mentions the news story. Thus, the news clearly highlights inequality and stereotype.

##### *15-year old girl dies in Chhaupadi Shed*

The story does perpetuate stereotype and shows high inequality as well where women are forced to reside in the shed during their menstruation (called chhaupadi in local dialect especially in the mid- and far western region of Nepal). News is about a ninth grader undergoing third day of her menstruation who died of suffocation in the shed at night. It depicts brutal image of society which forces menstruating women and girls out of the home excluding family members to stay in a shed with poor ventilation. The news also brings forth the traditional mindset of families about women's periodical cycle due to which they are still suffering.

##### *Major parties supporting 'Threshold'*

In this story, no women's opinions have been included. It's not even identified whether they have agreed to this context or not. Hence, despite representation of women in major political parties absence of their opinions in the news draws inequality in the news story.

##### *Program oriented for 'Safety measures taken by Pregnant Women'*

This story focuses on the present situation of conceiving and delivering a baby compared to the past. It also explains about health care facilities and practices related to pregnant mothers during ante-natal and post-natal period. Hence, the news is completely focused upon the women's perspective as a whole.

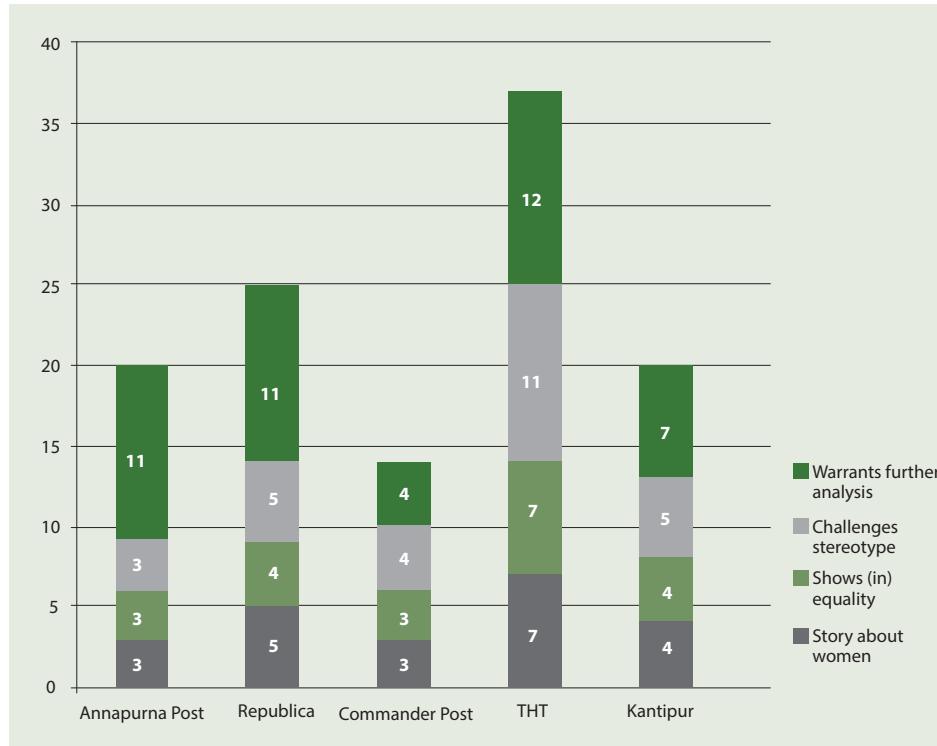
##### *Quake victims in Labarepauwa Camps brace for another winter tents*

The story is about miserable lives of earthquake victims under makeshift tents. In this story, it consists of picture with women faces and also highlights a women voice in regard to difficulties being faced while living under the tent during shivering cold. To this context, story signifies equality to produce equal participation as news actors.

##### *Proposed amendment lets naturalized head constitutional bodies*

This story contains maximum numbers of male source but lacks female sources. In the story about amendment of Nepal's Constitution,

#### Analysis of the gender based story



despite having significant numbers of women MPs absence of women's' opinions and statements is a remarkable issue thus highlighting inequality. Hence, the story has been selected under warranting further analysis.

#### ***NC was not informed at all***

This story is a politics based news where both male and female politicians participated in a meeting held to discuss on impeachment motion registered against Chief of anti-graft body. But the news lacks any women's statements regardless of 4 male quotes. This signifies story highlighting inequality.

#### ***Man arrested for attempting to murder ex-wife.***

This story is about a husband's multiple attempts to kill his ex-wife. The woman quoted as his ex-wife says she divorced him because of continuous severe torture after marriage. However, end note of the news which informs that the woman has been running a workshop on her own and parenting her 4 years old daughter challenging a stereotype of a divorced woman.

#### ***More women face domestic violence***

This news describes a study report on violence against women during the month of September and October. It says: among 54 cases recorded, 57% of the survivors were victims of domestic violence, 23% belonged to age group between 31-45. The reports also describes stereotypic nature of women. On the statement-survivors often choose to keep quiet and in 68% cases husbands were the perpetrators of violence. The record also suggested 13% women were subjected to physical torture, 5% suffered mental torture, 5% were raped and 4% were sexually abused and accused of witchcraft. This clearly highlights the inequality existing in the society.

#### ***Pushpa Basnet: From CNN Hero to Superhero***

This story is about a Nepali social worker Pushpa Basnet being honoured with the Super Hero award. The story clearly imposes on challenging stereotype of a woman; and her deeds. She is a single woman working for the welfare of children obliged to stay with their parents inside prison. She had been honored with CNN Heroes in 2012. The news absolutely challenges stereotype and is worthy of further analysis. She bagged the award amongst her competitors.

#### ***Citizenship issue should be resolved soon, says former minister Basnet***

This story shows the inequality existing among male and female in Nepal. As, male can easily

get citizenship even though he gets married to a foreigner. But in case of the female, they are deprived of getting citizenship easily. News includes lamentation of a woman saying: she could not get citizenship after getting married to an Indian and thus, could not provide birth certificate to her two daughters. Similarly, in another case a boy could not get citizenship in mother's name because she was married to an Australian but has been living in Nepal since long. Hence, the story not only perpetuates the stereotype but also highlights inequality. Overall, it shows the challenges these women have been faced.

#### ***Alopalo School***

The story is based on early/child marriage where both husband and wife attend their school one by one. This depicts female children's restraints to manage both education and household works together. Besides those, early pregnancy is also the major disturbing issue. News also describes problems of young mother after delivering child that they are sometimes compelled to leave school. This shows the challenges of women as stereotype and the inequality, they have to bear.

#### ***Speaker in bid to end house obstruction***

The story focuses on the issues of obstruction in the proceeding at the Parliamentary house. Where, almost all the leaders from different political parties were gathered. At the same time, it doesn't contain any women's perspective or opinion. Thus, it shows inequality as well.

#### ***Troublesome life abroad***

This story is based on a women, who has died in Illam and her family were not able to get her dead body for whole three months. This story

is about women and the problems her family has to face in order to get her dead body.

#### ***International Day of Women Human Right Defenders observed***

The story is based on the International Day of World Human Right Defenders. The story shows the victimization of women because of the state and its mechanism which were not correctly issued. In addition to this, this story also denotes that highlighting women's achievement never comes out in focus. It shows challenges faced by women due to discriminatory social structure and state mechanism.

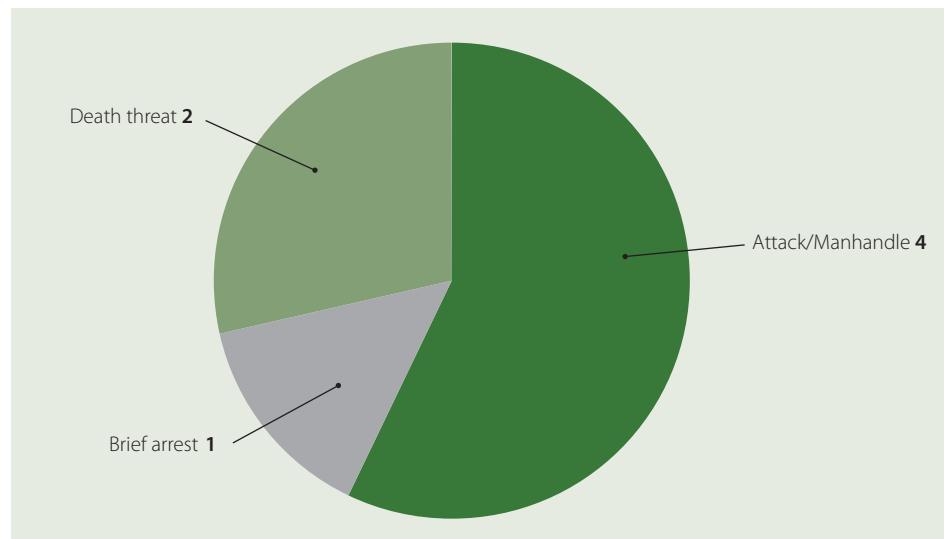
#### ***A teenage girl captured to force marry***

This story is about a girl who is just in her teens and was forcefully sent to stay at a boy's home for the boy had allegedly have affair with her. In addition to compensation to both families, village committee forced the girl to stay at his home even before marriage. Nonetheless, the girl was rescued later but such act of violence and forceful early marriage pictures horrible status of the female in Nepali society even in this 21st century. This presents the stereotypical notion of that family and our society as well.

#### ***I want to become a model', Tarkaliwali***

This story is about a teenage girl whose picture went viral on social media. The news explains: Kusum, who hailed from hilly village of Wangilang of Bhumlichok-8, Gorkha district, was herself amazed to learn that her pictures had gone viral on the internet. She came in the limelight and expressed her desire to become a model in future. This is a typical story of women who has her own dreams which are far from her reality. Hence, the story challenges stereotype as well as highlights equality in

#### ***Press Freedom Violations from October to December 2016***



context to the opportunity media has provided to the farmer's daughter.

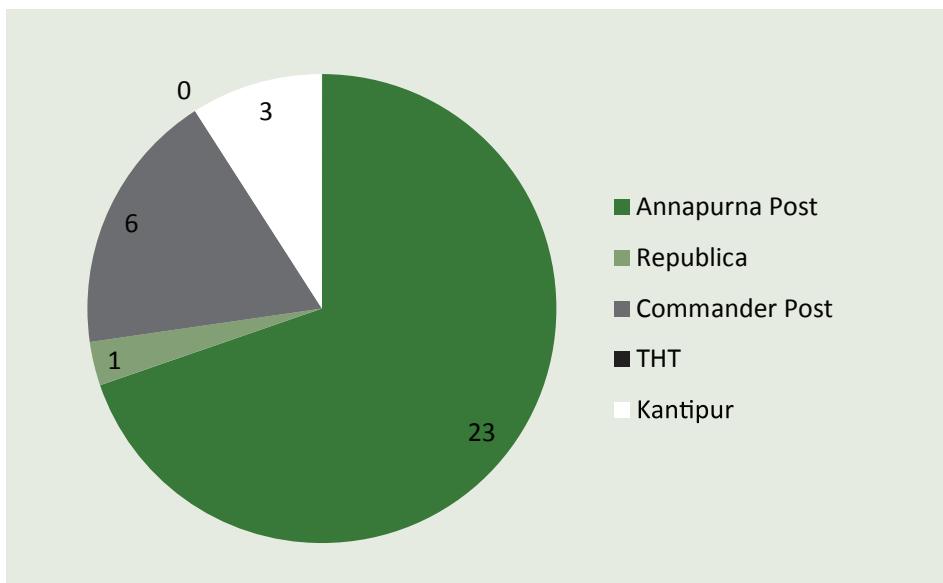
#### *Enraged parents manhandle teacher*

The issue is focused on a teacher (Diwakar Shrestha) who abused his female student at the school. Around 150 parents came to school to demand the school's officials to punish Shrestha. The story focuses on the sexual harassment of girls in school by their teacher in the name of arranging dresses and identity cards. The news presents how females are prone to violence even in the school. However, victim's family and other parents have raised voice against such hostility which signifies awareness against gender violence.

#### *Women suppress their uterine problems*

The story is about hesitation and to some extent restrictions of women to discuss about their uterine problems with medical officers. Giving examples of three women suffering from various uterine diseases who visited hospital only after extreme pain, the reporter presents how women are dedicated to their family and household works ignoring own pain. Even after declaration of free treatment, due to the lack of awareness on reproductive health, uterine diseases has become common problem among rural women. Hence, the story

#### **Female news writers in 5 print media**



perpetuates stereotype and eventually, does highlight inequality.

#### *6. Female Journalists in 5 print media*

To this context, data revealed Annapurna Post has maximum number of female journalist, while THT does not include any female names.

#### *7. Female sources in the news*

Similarly, in terms of women and girls as sources Annapurna Post exceeds the others followed by THT whereas, Commander Post occupies the least position.

#### **Opportunities and Learning**

Media monitoring through gender lens has not only capacitated Freedom Forum team on the issues but also helped the FF on advocating for gender equality in media. The tool provided by FPU remained very effective to bolster FF's media monitoring adding new dimensions to the regular work. Though begun with confusion, FPU team's constant suggestions and guidance made us know the matter clearly and accelerate the monitoring of gender content in five Nepali dailies. Needless to say, this new venture has helped in capacity building of the organization. This sort of monitoring can be replicated in other cross-cutting issues of social inclusion. Wider dissemination of the report would draw concerned from the stakeholders. It has been a tool of advocacy for gender equality in media.

#### **Recommendations**

- Stories based on social issues should also include opinions from local women and girls,
- Although number of women's participation has been growing in State agencies and political parties, it is quite dissatisfying in media. So, the women in State agencies and political parties can also help create atmosphere for equal participation of women in media,
- As some news depicted horrible gender stereotypes, the concerned State agencies must make concerned efforts to address women issues to bring them (women) to mainstream including in media.

#### **Conclusion**

Study revealed meager representation of women in Nepali print media. Among total 700 news scanned, only 45 highlighted (in) equality and warranted further analysis on gender perspective. Women journalists and sources comprised only 13.4% and 10.4% respectively. Overall, news on the political and governmental issues was found dominant. Among total 33 female journalists, only 18.52% reported on social and legal issues whereas 48.15% reported on political, on crime and violence and on science and technology. Similarly, Nepali news media focused more on political issues than social issues; which may also be due to swinging politics in Nepal. Among five vernacular dailies Annapurna Post revealed maximum inclusion of female as journalists and news sources. The report should serve as a wakeup call for the print media on how they should take women issues and ensure gender equality in media.

**Overall, news on the political and governmental issues was found dominant.**

**Among total 33 female journalists, only 18.52% reported on social and legal issues whereas 48.15% reported on political, on crime and violence and on science and technology.**

# Freedom Forum's Self Disclosure Update

## Compliance with RTI Law

Type and Nature of Organization	NGO working for Democracy, Right to Information, Freedom of Expression, Fiscal Transparency and Open Data		
Legal Status	Registered at District Administration Office Kathmandu. DAO Registration Number: 127/062/63, SWC Affiliation Number: 18518		
Location	Adarsa Marga, Prasuti Griha Road, Thapathali, Kathmandu		
Staffs and Roles	<p><b>Taranath Dahal:</b> Executive Chief, coordinates overall organizational and administrative affairs</p> <p><b>Krishna Sapkota:</b> Planning and Policy Advisor who is responsible for project design and planning and provides advisory support on policy affairs.</p> <p><b>Narayan Ghimire:</b> Media Monitoring Officer, who coordinates media focused initiatives</p> <p><b>Aruna Adhikari:</b> Finance and Administration Officer, looks after accounting and administrative affairs and performs responsibilities as the Information Officer.</p> <p><b>Nanu Maiya Khadka:</b> Gender Monitoring Officer, responsible for monitoring media content on gender perspectives</p> <p><b>Kumar Chaulagain:</b> Program Assistant</p> <p><b>Manju Ojha:</b> Media Monitoring Assistant</p> <p><b>Sarita Chaudhary:</b> Office Assistant</p> <p><b>Project Staffs:</b> Freedom Forum hires short-term project staffs based on project needs.</p>		
Ongoing Project Information	Project Name	Supporting Agency	Date of Signing the Contract
	Open Budget Survey 2017	IBP	7 June 2016
	Support to Enable Environment for Freedom of Expression in Nepal (SEFEN)- No News Is Bad News	Freedom Press Unlimited	29 October 2016
Services Offered/ Activities Carried Out	Research, capacity development and policy advocacy including media monitoring, trainings on RTI and journalism, meetings, workshops, seminars and other campaigns to promote issues of democracy, RTI, FoE, fiscal transparency, human rights, local governance. It also provides legal aid to journalists, media and information seekers.		
Responsible Authority	<p><b>Acting Chairperson:</b> Hari Binod Adhikari</p> <p><b>Executive Chief:</b> Taranath Dahal</p>		
Decision Making Process	<p><b>General Assembly:</b> Making policies, rules and regulations of organization</p> <p><b>Executive committee:</b> Formulation of action plans as per constitution of organization, rules and regulation</p> <p><b>Management team:</b> Running projects and daily operational affairs and reporting timely to the Executive Committee.</p>		
Past and Current Activities	Please follow the link: <a href="http://freedomforum.org.np/content/category/activities/">http://freedomforum.org.np/content/category/activities/</a>		
Information officer	<b>Aruna Adhikari</b>		
Financial Information	Freedom Forum received grants announcing Rs 4.2 million		
Official Website	<a href="http://www.freedomforum.org.np">www.freedomforum.org.np</a>		
Publications of Freedom Forum	Freedom Forum has over 50 Publications (printed) Please Follow the Link: <a href="http://freedomforum.org.np/content/publications/">http://freedomforum.org.np/content/publications/</a>		
Annual Report	<a href="http://freedomforum.org.np/content/publications/reports/annual-reports/">http://freedomforum.org.np/content/publications/reports/annual-reports/</a>		
Mechanism for Information Dissemination	Websites- <a href="http://www.freedomforum.org.np/">http://www.freedomforum.org.np/</a> ; <a href="http://www.nepalpressfreedom.org">www.nepalpressfreedom.org</a> , and Newsletter-Free Expression		

## FF in National/International Forum

■ Executive Chief Mr Taranath Dahal participated in the Global Summit of Open Government Partnership held in Paris from December 7 to 9, 2016. The OGP is a multilateral initiative aimed at securing concrete commitments from governments to promote transparency, empower citizens, fight corruption, and harness new technologies to strengthen governance.

■ Executive Board Member Sahajman Shrestha attended the 11th Internet Governance Forum held in Guadalajara city of Mexico from December 6 to 9, 2016. 

## Notice

Freedom Forum's Treasurer Mr Chiranjivi Kafle has tendered resignation from the post for pursuing PhD from England. He is currently in England for the higher academic degree. The FF Board has handed down the responsibility to Executive Member Mr Kedar Dahal as Acting Treasurer for the time being.

Similarly, Executive Member Mr Sanjib Ghimire has resigned from his post. Both Mr Kafle and Mr Ghimire are the founding members of the FF. The FF heartily thanks them for their contributions to and cooperation with this institution and extends best wishes ahead. 

# Silencing the Messenger: Communication Apps Under Pressure

By Sanja Kelly, Mai Truong, Adrian Shahbaz, and Madeline Earp

## Key Findings

- Internet freedom around the world declined in 2016 for the sixth consecutive year.
- Two-thirds of all internet users — 67 percent — live in countries where criticism of the government, military, or ruling family are subject to censorship.
- Social media users face unprecedented penalties, as authorities in 38 countries made arrests based on social media posts over the past year. Globally, 27 percent of all internet users live in countries where people have been arrested for publishing, sharing, or merely “liking” content on Facebook.
- Governments are increasingly going after messaging apps like WhatsApp and Telegram, which can spread information quickly and securely.

Internet freedom has declined for the sixth consecutive year, with more governments than ever before targeting social media and communication apps as a means of halting the rapid dissemination of information, particularly during anti-government protests.

Public-facing social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter have been subject to growing censorship for several years, but in a new trend, governments increasingly target voice communication and messaging apps such as WhatsApp and Telegram. These services are able to spread



A Bahraini woman uses a mobile phone to take photos during clashes with riot police in Sitra, south of the capital Manama. Getty Images.

information and connect users quickly and securely, making it more difficult for authorities to control the information landscape or conduct surveillance.

The increased controls show the importance of social media and online communication for advancing political freedom and social justice. It is no coincidence that the tools at the center of the current crackdown have been widely used to hold governments accountable and facilitate uncensored conversations. Authorities in several countries have even resorted to shutting down all internet access at politically contentious times, solely to prevent users from disseminating information

through social media and communication apps, with untold social, commercial, and humanitarian consequences.

Some communication apps face restrictions due to their encryption features, which make it extremely difficult for authorities to obtain user data, even for the legitimate purposes of law enforcement and national security. Online voice and video calling apps like Skype have also come under pressure for more mundane reasons. They are now restricted in several countries to protect the revenue of national telecommunications firms, as users were turning to the new services instead of making calls through fixed-line or mobile telephony.

(Source: <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-net/freedom-net-2016?gclid=CPaG26mQt9ECFdERaAodtsOvA>)

Freedom Forum is an independent, non-governmental and not-for-profit civil society organization working for the cause of social accountability, democracy and human rights focused on press freedom, freedom of expression and right to information in Nepal. Incepted in 2005, Freedom Forum has emerged as a prominent national organization in promoting access to information and freedom of expression through dialogue, research, training, public advocacy and campaign and programme implementation. Currently, the organization is working on the issues of public finance management, budget transparency, open data and aid governance, political and parliamentary accountability, freedom of expression online and open government partnership (OGP) based on its on-hand experience and learning.

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